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# THE CONVERSATION

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## Djokovic business case for higher men's pay in tennis harms equality

March 22, 2016 1.50pm GMT

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Djokovic: men deserve more. Shutterstock

In a controversial yet thought-provoking comment, world number one Novak Djokovic has questioned the equality of prize money in tennis, suggesting that men should be paid more as they have more spectators. Djokovic made the remarks following the furore created by Raymond Moore, CEO of the Indian Wells tournament, who said that women players rode on “the coat-tails” of the men’s game. Moore has since resigned.

Djokovic said:

*Stats are one of the ... reasons why maybe we should get awarded more. As long as it is like that and there is data and stats available and information ... upon who attracts more attention, spectators, who sells more tickets and stuff like that, in relation to that it has to be fairly distributed.*

He further said that male players should follow in the footsteps of the female players who “fought for what they deserve and they got it. On the other hand, I think that our men’s tennis world, ATP world, should fight for more because the stats are showing that we have much

more spectators on the men's tennis matches. Women should fight for what they think they deserve and we should fight for what we think we deserve.”

Djokovic's comments can be analysed from **two perspectives on diversity**: the business case and social justice case.

From a purely business perspective, the argument that viewing statistics may be used to determine fair distribution of prizes at joint events seems to be credible. This is broadly consistent with the human resource management principle of **pay for performance** or commission for sales. However, this argument fails to make or promote the case for why equality and diversity matters in business.

Women historically have been stereotyped and disadvantaged in all fields of life, including sports, and part of overcoming this is to accommodate and value differences between the sexes. A neglect of gender differences results in the **sameness orientation**, the idea that everyone has to be seen as the same regardless of their diversity. This may be problematic because women's and men's issues and life cycles (such as their needs for parental leave and work life balance) are not, and must not, be treated as identical.

Interestingly, while Djokovic alluded to physical differences between women and men when he said “their bodies are much different to men's bodies. They have to go through a lot of different things that we don't have to go through ... the hormones and different stuff”, he does not mention the long historical disadvantage that women have had due to these very differences – and how they are perceived. He seems to ignore that these differences need to be valued for greater equality and inclusion, instead of being used to reinforce and augment existing gender gaps – not only in sports but also in entertainment, employment, politics and leadership.



Unfair evaluation. Shutterstock

From a **social justice perspective of diversity**, it is unfair that women should be evaluated and paid less for their anatomical differences, and the fact that hormones – although he did not expand, it would seem plausible that he was including periods – can **affect women's training and performance**.

Life cycle and anatomical differences should not be used to penalise sportswomen – or any woman whose career is adversely affected due to **maternity leave and traditional family roles**. Accommodation of gender differences may already be arguably reflected in Grand Slams where women play only three sets or the **lack of men vs women tournaments** in professional tennis and football.

The fact that the resale price of Wimbledon debenture seat tickets for the men's finals is

usually two to three times higher than those for the women's is perhaps not only a measure of popularity but, if demographics of broadcast viewers of tennis are anything to go by, it could also include potential differences in total and disposable income of the men and women buying the tickets.

In the UK, the gender pay gap for the median earnings of full-time employees is more than 9% and may be as high as 54% in the top level, highest-paid jobs. Ticket sales may reflect and reinforce social inequalities and stereotypes, and are a poor measure for actual performance. Gender, racial and age difference have also been noted in TV viewership of sports events – which may only serve to reinforce prejudices rather than solving them.

And then there is also an issue of equity and class across the field, including how money is distributed to the lower rungs of the sport and discrepancies between the top tier and lower tier earnings in tennis. This also plays into issues of gender gaps and merits urgent attention.



equal pay

Gender

Tennis

Novak Djokovic



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